

Calendar No. 68

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 196

[Report No. 116-32]

To save taxpayer money and improve the efficiency and speed of intragovernmental correspondence, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 19, 2019

Mr. PORTMAN (for himself, Ms. HASSAN, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. DAINES, Ms. ERNST, Mr. JONES, and Mr. CARPER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

APRIL 10, 2019

Reported by Mr. JOHNSON, with amendments

[Omit the part struck through and insert the part printed in italic]

A BILL

To save taxpayer money and improve the efficiency and speed of intragovernmental correspondence, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Modernizing Congress-
3 sional Reporting Act of 2019”.

4 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

5 In this Act—

6 (1) the term “acceptable electronic format”
7 means a file format and metadata elements author-
8 ized by the National Archives and Records Adminis-
9 tration for the transfer of permanent electronic
10 records—

11 (A) as set forth in—

12 (i) National Archives and Records Ad-
13 ministration Bulletin 2014–04: Revised
14 Format Guidance for the Transfer of Per-
15 manent Electronic Records, dated January
16 31, 2014, or any successor bulletin; and

17 (ii) National Archives and Records
18 Administration Bulletin 2015–04: Metada-
19 ta Guidance for the Transfer of Permanent
20 Electronic Records, dated September 15,
21 2015, or any successor bulletin; and

22 (B) that complies with the requirements of
23 the Office of Management and Budget Memo-
24 randum on the Managing Government Records
25 Directive, dated August 24, 2012 (M–12–18),
26 or any successor memorandum;

1 (2) the term “agency”—

2 (A) means—

3 (i) a Federal agency, as defined in
4 section 102 of title 40, United States
5 Code; and

6 (ii) an agency, as defined in section
7 552(f)(1) of title 5, United States Code;
8 and

9 (B) does not include the Government Ac-
10 countability Office;

11 (3) the term “congressionally mandated report”
12 means a report that is required to be submitted to
13 either House of Congress or any committee of Con-
14 gress, or subcommittee thereof, by a statute, resolu-
15 tion, or conference report that accompanies legisla-
16 tion enacted into law;

17 (4)(3) the term “congressional office” means—
18 (A) an office of any committee or sub-
19 committee of the Senate or the House of Rep-
20 resentatives, including any select or special
21 committee;

22 (B) an office of any individual Senator or
23 Member of the House of Representatives;

24 (C) a leadership office of the Senate or the
25 House of Representatives; and

1 (D) Congress or any House of Congress;

2 (4) *the term “congressionally mandated report”*
3 *means a report that is required to be submitted to ei-*
4 *ther House of Congress or any committee of Congress,*
5 *or subcommittee thereof, by a statute, resolution, or*
6 *conference report that accompanies legislation enacted*
7 *into law;*

8 (5) the term “open format” means a file format
9 for storing digital data based on an underlying open
10 standard that—

11 (A) is not encumbered by any restrictions
12 that would impede reuse; and

13 (B) is based on an underlying open data
14 standard that is maintained by a standards or-
15 ganization;

16 (6) the term “recorded information” includes
17 all recorded information, regardless of form or char-
18 acteristics; and

19 (7) the term “structured data” has the meaning
20 given the term in National Archives and Records
21 Administration Bulletin 2014–04: Revised Format
22 Guidance for the Transfer of Permanent Electronic
23 Records, dated January 31, 2014, or any successor
24 bulletin.

1 **SEC. 3. ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION OF REPORTS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—On and after the date that is 30
3 days after the date of enactment of this Act, except as
4 provided in subsection (c) and to the extent specifically
5 required otherwise by law—

6 (1) any report or other recorded information re-
7 quired to be submitted to Congress by an agency
8 under any provision of law, and any response from
9 an agency to a request by a congressional office for
10 any report or other recorded information, shall only
11 be transmitted by the agency in an acceptable elec-
12 tronic format; and

13 (2) any structured data included in or with, or
14 used to create any chart included in or with, any re-
15 port or other recorded information described in
16 paragraph (1) shall be transmitted by the agency in
17 an acceptable electronic format for structured data.

18 (b) FORMAT PREFERENCE.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—In transmitting a report or
20 other recorded information described in subsection
21 (a) to a congressional office, an agency shall, to the
22 extent possible, provide the original electronic file or
23 an electronically converted file rather than a scanned
24 document, even if the document includes a signa-
25 ture.

1 (2) SEARCHABLE SCANNED DOCUMENTS.—

2 Each scanned document that is transmitted by an
3 agency to a congressional office shall be made
4 searchable via optical character recognition or other
5 means.

6 (c) OTHER FORMATS.—An agency that is required to
7 transmit a report or other recorded information described
8 in subsection (a) to a congressional office in an acceptable
9 electronic format may, if requested by, or otherwise agreed
10 to with, the congressional office—

11 (1) transmit the report or other recorded infor-
12 mation to the congressional office—

13 (A) in an electronic format that is not an
14 acceptable electronic format; or

15 (B) as a physical document;

16 (2) allow the report or other recorded informa-
17 tion to be reviewed in camera; or

18 (3) not transmit the report or other recorded
19 information.

20 (d) ROUTING.—If a congressional office designates a
21 method to receive reports and other recorded information
22 described in subsection (a) from agencies, each agency
23 shall transmit a report or other recorded information to
24 the congressional office using the designated method, un-
25 less otherwise requested by the congressional office.

1 **SEC. 4. PUBLISHING OF REPORTS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—On and after the date that is 30
3 days after the date of enactment of this Act, any congress-
4 sionally mandated report, and any structured data de-
5 scribed in section 3(a)(2) and any transmittal letter asso-
6 ciated with the report, shall be posted on the public
7 website of the agency submitting the report—

8 (1) in an acceptable electronic format;
9 (2) in an open format;
10 (3) in accordance with the format preference
11 described in section 3(b); and

12 (4) at a uniform resource locator or similar lo-
13 cator that is changed as infrequently as possible.

14 (b) FREE ACCESS.—No fee, registration requirement,
15 or other access limitation shall be imposed on access to
16 any report required to be posted under subsection (a).

17 (c) OPEN ACCESS.—All reports, data, and other in-
18 formation posted under this section shall be available to
19 the public without restrictions, including restrictions that
20 would impede reuse of any or all elements of the informa-
21 tion.

22 (d) EASE OF ACCESS.—Each agency shall provide in
23 tabular form a list of all reports, data, or other informa-
24 tion required to be posted under subsection (a) that—

25 (1) is—

- 1 (A) accessible via a link posted at the foot-
2 er of the public website of the agency;
- 3 (B) accessible at a uniform resource loca-
4 tor or similar locator that is changed as infre-
5 quently as practicable;
- 6 (C) in a structure that is changed as infre-
7 quently as practicable and is as consistent with
8 the structure used by other agencies as prac-
9 ticable;
- 10 (D) searchable and sortable by, at a min-
11 imum—
- 12 (i) the title of the report;
- 13 (ii) the date of publication of the re-
14 port;
- 15 (iii) each congressional office receiving
16 the report, if applicable;
- 17 (iv) the statute, resolution, or con-
18 ference report requiring the report;
- 19 (v) the metadata elements of the re-
20 port;
- 21 (vi) a unique alphanumeric identifier
22 for the report that is consistent across re-
23 port editions; and
- 24 (vii) the serial number, Super-
25 intendent of Documents number, or other

1 identification number for the report, if ap-
2 plicable;

3 (E) available in an acceptable electronic
4 format for structured data, to allow for auto-
5 mated parsing of all data described in subpara-
6 graph (D) and download of all reports and as-
7 sociated structured data; and

8 (F) updated immediately upon posting of
9 the report, data, or other information; and

10 (2) contains links to download each report,
11 data, and other information.

12 (e) **TIMELY ACCESS.**—An agency shall post a report,
13 data, or other information required to be posted by the
14 agency under subsection (a) not later than 30 days after
15 the date on which the agency submits the report, data,
16 or other information to Congress.

17 (f) **REMOVING AND ALTERING REPORTS.**—An agency
18 may only change or remove, with the exception of technical
19 changes, a report, data, or other information required to
20 be posted by the agency under subsection (a) if—

21 (1) the head of the agency consults with each
22 congressional office to which the report, data, or
23 other information is submitted; and

1 (2) Congress enacts a joint resolution author-
2 izing the changing or removal of the report, data, or
3 other information.

4 (g) RELATION TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

5 ACT AND REDACTION.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this section shall
7 be construed to require the disclosure of information
8 or records that are—

9 (A) exempt from disclosure under section
10 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly
11 known as the “Freedom of Information Act”);
12 or

13 (B) otherwise prohibited from disclosure by
14 law.

15 (2) REDACTION OF REPORT.—With respect to
16 each report, data, or other information required to
17 be posted by an agency under subsection (a), the
18 head of the agency shall—

19 (A) redact any information that may not
20 be disclosed under section 552(b) of title 5,
21 United States Code, or is otherwise prohibited
22 from disclosure by law, before posting the re-
23 port;

24 (B) only redact the information described
25 in subparagraph (A);

1 (C) identify where each redaction is made
2 in the report, data, or other information; and
3 (D) identify the exemption under such sec-
4 tion 552(b) under which each redaction is
5 made.

6 (h) WITHHOLDING INFORMATION.—An agency—
7 (1) may withhold information otherwise re-
8 quired to be disclosed under this section only if—
9 (A) the agency reasonably foresees that
10 disclosure would harm an interest protected by
11 an exemption described in section 552(b) of
12 title 5, United States Code; or
13 (B) disclosure is prohibited by law; and
14 (2) shall—

15 (A) consider whether partial disclosure of
16 information otherwise required to be disclosed
17 under this section is possible whenever the
18 agency determines that a full disclosure of the
19 information is not possible; and
20 (B) take reasonable steps necessary to seg-
21 regate and release nonexempt information.

22 (i) OPEN DATA REGISTRATION.—Not later than 30
23 days after the date of enactment of this Act, each agency
24 shall make the list described in subsection (d) available
25 to the public on Data.gov or a successor Federal open gov-

1 ernment data site, in a structure and format used by that
2 system.

3 (j) SUBMISSION OF REPORTS.—Nothing in this sec-
4 tion shall be construed to—

5 (1) relieve an agency of any other requirement
6 to publish a congressionally mandated report on the
7 website of the agency or otherwise submit a congres-
8 sionally mandated report to Congress or specific
9 committees or subcommittees of Congress; or

10 (2) impose any additional requirement to redact
11 any submission to or withhold information from any
12 congressional office.

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